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ABSTRACT

Three preschool children were observed intensively for three years to document children's early television viewing repertoires and programing preferences. Relevant information was obtained from children and parents during biweekly home television viewing sessions. In addition, parents reported in diaries and questionnaires all aspects of their children's television viewing behavior. The data indicated several clear developmental trends in children's acquisition of television repertoires. Generally, the children's repertoires expanded with age to include a greater variety of television fare, reflecting their progressively greater ability to discriminate among programs. At two years of age they watched some adult fare, but their repertoires consisted primarily of "Sesame Street" and other children's shows. Cartoons were viewed avidly throughout the preschool years. Situation comedy viewing began after the age of three, and action-adventure programs were watched after four years of age. At all ages observed, the company of parents while viewing appeared to be a significant factor in children's willingness to watch certain television programs, such as the news.
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Technical Report No. 20

"THAT'S MY FAVORITE":

A STUDY OF PRESCHOOLERS' TELEVISION REPERTOIRES AND PREFERENCES

by

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Abstract

Three preschool children were observed intensively for three years to document children's early television viewing repertoires and programming preferences. Relevant information was obtained from children and parents during bi-weekly home television-viewing sessions. In addition, parents reported in diaries and questionnaires all aspects of their children's television viewing behavior.

The data indicate several clear developmental trends in children's acquisition of television repertoires. Generally, with age, children's repertoires expand to include a greater variety of television fare. Children as young as 2 years watch some adult fare, though their repertoires consist primarily of Sesame Street and other children's shows. Cartoons are viewed avidly throughout the preschool years. Situation comedy viewing begins after the age of 3:0 and action-adventure programs are watched after 4 years of age. At all ages observed, the company of parents while viewing appears to be a significant factor in children's willingness to watch certain television programs.

Children's television preferences become more varied with age and reflect a progressively greater ability to discriminate among programs. Between the ages of 2 and 3 years, children tend to prefer age-appropriate fare and cartoons. At age 3, preferences for situation comedies emerge, followed by preferences for live-action action-adventure fare after the age of 4. All children dislike the news and most adult programming though, again, children are willing, at any age, to express preferences

for this fare if a parent views it with them. The cause and significance of these preference patterns are discussed. In addition, consideration is given to the role parents play in the development of their children's television repertoires and preferences.

"That's My Favorite":
A Study of Preschoolers' Television Repertoires and Preferences

Martha Vibbert, Leona Jaglom, Howard Gardner, Paula G. Wilder

I. Introduction

Young preschool children seated in front of a television set have virtually no physical control over the medium that occupies them for so many hours of their waking day. The flickering images and multiple sounds which are projected from behind a glass screen are immune to the manipulations of a toddler whose hands often fail even to reach the on-off switch. Though physically passive in relation to the television, the child is extremely active in attempting to decode the worlds presented by television. As a child begins to perceive regularity within her viewing repertoire, preferences for certain programming become apparent. The child begins to label certain shows and characters as favorites or hated. If acknowledged by a parent or fellow viewer, these preference decisions become one of the child's first means of exerting control over her television viewing experiences. By changing a channel (or asking a parent to do so) or by walking away from a disliked show, the child takes a step towards determining her viewing schedule.

A variety of influences, including parents, siblings, and friends, all play a role in determining what fare a child will view and be encouraged to watch. Parents differ greatly in their opinions about what programming is and is not appropriate for their children to watch. It is not clear, however, in what ways different parental attitudes and rules affect children's developing television habits or how children assimilate these attitudes

and rules when developing their own preferences and tastes.

In addition to tackling the problem of parental practices and restrictions, our research has examined the nature of preschoolers' early television preferences in relation to their overall viewing repertoires. Focussing on youngsters from the ages of 2 to 5 years, we set out to shed light on the following sets of questions:

1. What do children between the ages of 2 and 5 watch on television? How diversified is this early television viewing? Are there similarities across children in these early repertoires and are there discernible developmental trends in the onset and cessation of viewing specific types of programming?

2. What shows and/or types of shows do children prefer during the preschool years? What shows do they dislike? Are there similarities in preferences across children and are there discernible developmental trends in children's evolving preferences? Finally, what accounts for the appeal and non-appeal of certain programming at different ages?

Lyle and Hoffman (1972) gathered information about television viewing patterns and preferences from a stratified sample of 158 preschool children. The authors reported that when asked to name their favorite program, two-thirds of the choices children made were for various types of cartoons. Three year olds, the youngest children in their sample, named Sesame Street as their favorite program most often.

More recently, in their developmental study of the congruence between adult and children's television viewing, Winick and Winick (1979) accumulated a rough index of preschoolers' viewing habits based on one television viewing/interview session with children in their homes. Among other findings, the Winicks report that cartoons are popular viewing fare

throughout childhood, that educational programs are especially appealing to young preschool girls and, that by 6 years, the appeal of situation comedies in children's viewing profiles is well established.

In addition to these descriptive studies, we have also been informed by researchers who have hypothesized about the underlying factors which guide early viewing. This more experimental line of research has demonstrated the appeal of children's fare which uses flashy formal features to attract and maintain young viewers' attention (Huston-Stein and Wright, 1977). Also, Collins (1970) and, more recently, Anderson, Lorch, Field, and Sanders (in press) have implied that before children can attend to or enjoy certain television programming, they must have the ability to comprehend some degree of its content.

Based on the findings summarized above, we predicted that the viewing repertoires of children in our study would gradually increase and diversify with age. We expected that the majority of programs which the children viewed would be children's shows and cartoons.

As regards children's preferences for the television fare which they view, we predicted that all children would enjoy most children's programs and cartoons and, with age, would begin to express preferences for shows geared to school-age and adult audiences. In general, we expected to find that 2 year olds would have little or no ability to discriminate among shows, while 4-1/2 year olds would be far more likely to pick and choose among the programs they watched.

Our research differs significantly from others in that it attempts to chart the viewing repertoires and preferences of three young children over the course of three years. Subjects came from lower-middle and middle income families selected for participation in the study because their parents

were high-frequency viewers. In these households, the television was typically on for anywhere from 4-10 hours a day. In order to eliminate the direct effects of sibling television viewing behaviors, we used only first-born children in our study.

This research is part of a larger longitudinal study investigating preschoolers' early television competence. The design of this study models Piaget's study of the sensori-motor period (1952, 1954) and Roger Brown's study of the origins of language (1973). Though each of these studies involved only three subjects, they have produced highly robust findings.

II. Methods

Three* children participated in a three year longitudinal study extending from the time they were 2 to 5 years of age. Subjects were seen in bi-weekly home visits lasting one and one-half to two hours. The experimenter engaged the children in a variety of television tasks and observed approximately one half hour of children's natural television viewing. A special effort was made to schedule visits during each child's normal viewing time. In addition, on a quarterly basis, subjects viewed experimental videotapes featuring a sequence of short edited segments from a wide variety of television fare. Children were videotaped during these viewing sessions and the experimenter kept observational notes of each child's comments and general attention level during all segments. Videotape sessions provided systematic data about all children's reactions to the

*The sample originally consisted of four subjects, but one was sufficiently unusual and laggard in her overall development as well as in her television viewing behavior, that her data have been excluded from the analysis.

same sample of television fare over time.

During home visits parents frequently offered comments and observations concerning their child's evolving viewing routine. These comments, along with parents' reports of their child's preferences and non-preferences, were recorded and transcribed.

In addition to participating in these informal conversations, parents were asked to keep written diaries of children's television-relevant comments and experiences. At six-month intervals parents filled out detailed questionnaires which were designed to provide information as to each child's viewing schedule and program choices. Diaries and questionnaires also provided an opportunity for parents to describe their own television viewing habits and attitudes.

Verbatim transcripts were compiled for all sessions. Transcripts included observations of children's general attention and behavior during television and videotape viewing.

A. Repertoire

An initial data search was conducted to characterize the children's viewing repertoires at all ages. All information concerning the shows or types of shows that children were watching during the 3 years was charted. Shows and categories of shows described as "not viewed" were also noted. In an effort to obtain a general indication of the frequency with which children watched different types of programming, a record was kept of the number of times a show or category appeared in the data. Conversations

with parents along with parent diaries and questionnaires yielded information as to which shows children generally did or did not watch and which new programs were added or deleted from their regular schedules.

B. Preferences and Non-Preferences

All data were examined for information regarding the types of programming children prefer. Program types were divided into eight categories.* These eight categories are listed below with some examples of the specific shows they include.

1. Sesame Street**
2. Children's Shows:

   Educational - Mister Rogers, Zoom, The Electric Company, Romper Room
   Non-educational - Three Stooges, Bozo, Creature Feature

3. Cartoons:

   Mickey Mouse, Superfriends (Superman, Spiderman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Plasticman), Casper, Flintstones

4. Situation Comedy/Family/Variety:

   Gilligan's Island, Odd Couple, Little House on the Prairie, Sanford and Son, Bewitched, Happy Days, Carol Burnett, Donny and Marie

5. Action-Adventure:

   The Incredible Hulk, Six Million Dollar Man, Bionic Man, Emergency One, Battle of the Planets, Star Trek

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*These are also the categories used in reporting repertoire data.

**Sesame Street was included as a separate category because of its enormous popularity among children and parents and because of its pervasive presence in our culture.

6. Adult:

Dinah Shore, Merv Griffin, The Today Show, Soap Operas, Movies (adult), Evening Magazine, Sports Shows

7. News:

Nightly news programs, weather, sports report, special coverage of political events, etc.

8. Commercials

Data were sorted into three groups: (1) preferences; (2) non-preferences; and (3) choice situations.

1) Bits were scored as preferences only if a child or parent said a child "enjoyed," "liked," "was particularly attracted to," or "loved" a show, or if a child or parent labeled a show his/her "favorite." Requests for shows or habitual viewing of shows were not considered direct indications of preference. Obvious non-verbal behaviors such as running to the TV room to watch a particular show or crying when missing a show were scored as preferences. All bits indicating preferences received 1 point.

Examples:

When asked if Sesame Street is still her favorite, Kathy responds, "Of course." (4:4) (child)

Donny loves Spiderman and Letterman (2:5) (parent diary)

Kathy still loves commercials--will come from another room to watch every time (4:3) (mother's comment)

2) Bits were scored as not preferred only if a child or parent said a child "hated" or "disliked" a show or category of shows. The fact that a child did not watch a show was not considered direct evidence of dislike.

Again, only obvious non-verbal behaviors such as leaving the TV room when a particular show comes on, or turning the set off during a show were considered as indications of non-preference. All non-preferred bits received 1 point.

Examples:

John says he doesn't like Romper Room and doesn't want to watch it during a home visit. (4:2)

Kathy says, "I hate the news. It talks about everything I hate." (4:3)

Donny leaves room when Mother watches news in the evenings. (3:7) (mother's comment)

All preference and non-preference scores indicated whether information was in verbal form and whether child or parent made the statement. Wherever possible, records were kept of the context of each data bit, i.e., parent comment, diary, child-spontaneous, etc.

3) Choice situations. In addition to the above, a third set of data was recorded and scored. If a child chose, or was reported to choose, one show over another, the chosen show was given a value of .5 as preference data and the show not chosen was given a value of .5 as non-preferred data. The decision to score these data as only .5 was based on the fact that the child was not indicating a true preference or non-preference. Instead, the child was preferring one show or type of programming relative to another. Because they were primarily derived from children's spontaneous behavior, choice data have a unique status in this study.

Examples:

Kathy chooses Happy Days over Sesame Street during home visit. (4:3) (child)

John said he wanted the Three Stooges over Sesame Street. (3:1) (mother's comment)

Donny prefers Gilligan's Island to Captain Kangaroo every morning. (3:0) (mother's comment)

C. Scoring

Based on an independent rater's scoring of a representative subset of the data (50%), 89% reliability was achieved. Agreement on final scores was reached through discussion of individual items.

D. Attention Data

Experimenter observations of children's general attention level during all segments of videotape viewing were noted. Only highest and lowest attention levels were examined. General impressions of this data will be given.

III. Results and Discussion

A. Repertoire

Table 1 summarizes major repertoire findings for the three children during the three years under investigation. Parent diaries, questionnaires, and comments account for the large majority of these data. More information was available concerning programs the children were watching than those they avoided, since parents tended to report the latter less often. Because repertoire data provides a context against which to evaluate children's preferences and non-preferences, it will be reported and discussed first.

1. 2:0 - 2:11. Table 1 indicates several similarities across children's repertoires during this period. All of the children watch Sesame Street consistently, though Kathy is, by far, the most frequent viewer. The data also indicate that all the children view some Children's Shows. The majority of Children's Shows viewed appear to be educational

and geared specifically to preschoolers. The appearance of shows such as Mister Rogers, Captain Kangaroo, Romper Room and Sesame Street in children's early repertoires most likely reflects parents' favorable attitudes toward the majority of children's programming. Our data indicate that parents quite often initiate and encourage their children's viewing of this age-appropriate fare.

In addition to encouraging age-appropriate viewing, the parents in our study exerted influence over their children's viewing habits in other ways. For example, both Donny and Kathy are reported to view Adult programming with their parents. Donny watches Situation Comedy/Variety fare and specials with his parents in the early evenings. Kathy and her mother watch talk shows and game shows together during the day. Though it is clear that children as young as 2 years are primarily following their parents' viewing schedule when they "watch" this programming, it is worth noting that they develop expectations for and attachments to these adult shows. For example, as early as 2:1, Kathy regularly requests several well-known talk show hosts and specific game shows by name. Donny, at 2:5, requests the adult serial Roots as well as specials aired on Channel 2.

That the 2 year old also spends time watching television in the absence of parental company is illustrated by both Donny and John's avid Cartoon viewing. During this period, both boys begin watching a great quantity and variety of Cartoons in the afternoons and on Saturday and Sunday mornings. The children's Cartoon viewing at this early age underscores the great appeal of animation for toddlers.

Throughout the 3 years investigated, due principally to her parents' prohibitions against certain fare, Kathy's repertoire data differs from the

boys'. For example, during the period from 2:0 to 3:10, Kathy's parents do not allow her to view cartoons. In relation to the boys, this represents a large omission in her repertoire. However, Kathy, unlike the boys, displays a strong and unyielding attraction to Commercials. At 2:3 her parents report that Kathy eagerly awaits advertisements and views them with "fascination."

From a production point of view that considers formal features exclusively, cartoons and commercials are often very similar (Alwitt, Anderson, Lorch, and Levin, in press; Huston-Stein and Wright, 1977). Both formats typically employ sound, action, color, and fast paced edits. Also, commercials, especially those geared towards children, often use animation. Both formats are short and present a simple, narrative line. For these reasons, it could be argued that Kathy's viewing of commercials is, to a certain extent, the counterpart of Donny's and John's cartoon viewing. (See Preference Trends for more discussion of the attraction of formal features.)

2. 3:0 - 3:11. As Table 1 indicates, all three children's viewing repertoires expand during the ages between 3:0 and 3:11. Besides regularly viewing Sesame Street, all three children begin to watch more Children's Shows. John and Donny watch a variety of educational and non-educational children's programming. Kathy primarily views the educational children's shows her parents encourage.

Both Donny and John begin watching numerous Situation Comedy shows. Interestingly, Donny no longer appears to require his parents' company while viewing this fare as he did during the previous period.

While Cartoons continue to be an extremely popular staple in the boys' viewing diet, Kathy begins viewing them only after 3:10. It is striking that Kathy's parents' decision to allow her to begin watching cartoons at this age is immediately reflected in her repertoire data. Saturday morning cartoon viewing is evident right after 3:10 and Kathy's mother reports that cartoon characters become apparent in Kathy's play and comments.

Kathy's repertoire departs from the boys' pattern in several interesting ways. Unlike the boys, Kathy still views commercials very closely. At 3:11 her mother reports that Kathy "wants to watch all commercials." This comment, taken with others of the same period, suggests that Kathy does not clearly distinguish between commercials on the basis of content such as specific personalities or products. This further supports our earlier claim that for Kathy it is the formal features of advertisements that are attractive; in much the same way that cartoons are attractive for the boys.

Another difference in Kathy's repertoire is the adult programming she regularly views with her parents. Whereas the data suggest that Donny and John are gradually watching more shows independent of their parents during this period, Kathy continues to closely follow her parents' early evening viewing schedule. While this adult schedule includes various game shows and news programs, it does not include much of the Situation Comedy fare that Donny and John view in the evening.

3. 4:0 - 4:11. The three children's repertoires converge much more during the ages between 4:0 and 4:11 than during earlier periods. A great variety and quantity of Cartoon viewing appears in all repertoires. Kathy's Cartoon repertoire easily matches the boys' despite her late

exposure to this fare at 3:10. Sesame Street is regularly viewed by all children, though Kathy now views it less often than before and the boys view it more frequently. The viewing of Children's Shows appears to decline slightly for all children as their schedules begin to include more novel fare: Action-Adventure shows in the case of the boys and Situation Comedies in Kathy's case.

All children now display the same phenomenon of watching Adult Shows with their parents as that described for Kathy at 2:0 - 2:11 and 3:0 - 3:11, and for Donny at 2:0 - 2:11. This is particularly conspicuous during the 4:0 - 4:11 period when all children appear to be watching the majority of their television programming independent of their parents. If in the company of one or both parents, children at this age will watch adult fare which they would otherwise avoid. For example, at 4:1, if accompanied by his mother, Donny will watch movies and soap operas. Similarly, during this period, John often watches bowling matches and the news with his father.

Again, there are some differences in the children's viewing habits that result from the stricter constraints which Kathy's parents place on her viewing. During this period, Donny and John begin viewing Action-Adventure shows. Because Kathy's parents believe that this fare is "too violent," they do not allow her to view it. The Action-Adventure programming which Donny and John typically view involves action-filled plots in which superhero characters pit their powers against evil forces. In the case of the boys, it seems very clear that this Action-Adventure fare replaces the Situation Comedies which were so frequently viewed during the previous period. Kathy, on the other hand, begins watching much

of the same Situation Comedy fare at 4:0 - 4:11 that the boys viewed at 3:0 - 3:11. (Though, as previously mentioned, Kathy is not allowed to view the superhero live-action fare which the boys enjoy, she does watch all the same superhero animation as the boys do.)

Finally, Kathy continues to watch Commercials with interest, though her parents observe that her earlier enthusiasm for this fare has waned. (See Table 2 on Preferences and Non-Preferences) Given our earlier claim about the compensatory role Commercials have played in Kathy's repertoire, this decline of interest may signal a new and growing interest in cartoon viewing.

B. Summary of Repertoire Data

Data for the three children suggest some general conclusions about the viewing repertoires of preschoolers and the role which parents play in the development of these repertoires.

There appears to be an orderly sequence in the onset of viewing certain television fare even in the face of parental prohibitions that cause one child to lag behind others in the timing and amount of exposure. All children begin by viewing the programs most obviously geared to their age group: e.g.,Sesame Street; Children's Shows, such as Mister Rogers, Romper Room, etc.; and, if allowed, Cartoons. These viewing experiences most likely reflect children's preferences for appealing, age-appropriate fare (see Preference discussion below) as well as positive parental attitudes towards the majority of young children's programming. In addition to these factors, there are, no doubt, other incidental reasons why 2 year olds watch this programming: Children's Shows are often aired while a busy parent is cooking dinner or enjoying a few more hours of sleep on a weekend morning.

Our evidence also suggests that the 2 year old is exposed to a great deal of adult programming in households where parents view television during the day and evenings. It is noteworthy that children attend to these shows enough to develop expectations for and attachments to their characters. Furthermore, we have seen that early exposure to this programming with adults can encourage a child to begin watching more mature fare on his own. This was evident in Donny's data where he watched many Situation Comedy shows with his parents at 2:0 - 2:11, and then continued to do so independently at 3:0 - 3:11.

As the toddler grows, his repertoire expands to include more children's fare. Also, as illustrated in Donny and John's data, Situation Comedy viewing becomes prominent. In general, children view more TV without adults. Despite this increased volition on the part of the child, parental company continues to be important during television viewing. Throughout the three years investigated, parents are the major impetus for the toddler's exposure to certain adult programming such as news, soap operas, game shows, talk shows, and sports events. Even at 4:11 when they are well entrenched in their own viewing habits and preferences, children will tolerate this fare if in the company of a parent.

Repertoires continue to expand during the children's fourth and fifth years. For children whose viewing is unrestricted, new programming (i.e., Action-Adventure fare) aired later in the evening and offering new challenges in narrative comprehension, begins to take viewing precedence over Situation Comedies and more age-appropriate Children's Shows. Interestingly, our data suggest that Sesame Street is immune to this shift. Viewing of Sesame Street at 4:0 - 4:11 is still constant and, in some

cases, more frequent. It may be that the 4 year old remains attracted to the highly familiar format and family of characters but watches for new reasons. By this age, the child is optimally challenged by the educational material that Sesame Street presents. Similarly, the level of Cartoon viewing remains constant, presumably due to the inherent appeal of this fare throughout the preschool years.

Note that our data support this trend in repertoire acquisition, from Children's Shows and Cartoons to Situation Comedies and Action-Adventure fare, even in the case of Kathy whose parents restrict her viewing at certain ages. As soon as Kathy's parents allow her to view cartoons, she catches up to her peers in both amount and variety of cartoons viewed. Though her parents do not allow her to stay up and view Situation Comedies with them in the evening at age 3, Kathy's avid Situation Comedy viewing at 4 appears to compensate for this delay. If repertoire data were available for Kathy at age 5:0 - 5:11 it would be interesting to see whether her parents relax their prohibition against Action-Adventure fare and whether Kathy, like the boys, would begin watching these programs. Support for this prediction is available in the data that reveals Kathy's strong attraction to the superhero action-adventure animation that she does watch.

One final comment. Parents have a very difficult time consistently restricting their children from watching the large range of programming available on television. For example, Kathy's mother describes how the pervasive "lore" of Cartoons at nursery school influenced her decision finally to allow Kathy to watch Cartoons. Though Donny's mother did not allow him to watch The Incredible Hulk at 4:0, by the end of this period it is listed as one of his "favorites." Whether due to the influence of

other children or whether due to parents' own viewing habits, preschoolers from high viewing families, are inevitably exposed to a great deal of programming presented on television.

C. Preferences and Non-Preferences

Table 2 summarizes all preference and non-preference data for the children at each of three year-long intervals. Data are divided according to appropriate program categories. Preference and non-preference quantities are percentages of total data for each child during each of the three periods.*

The majority of data (51%) were derived from parent diaries, questionnaires and conversations during home visits and videotape sessions. Children's comments and non-verbal indications of preference and non-preference account for roughly 34% of the data. Choice situation data (where a child chooses, or is reported to choose one show over another) account for only 15% of the data. Because parent diaries and comments make up the majority of data, the children's total preference percentages outnumber total non-preference percentages. Parents tended to report the programming that their children preferred more often than they reported the programming that their children disliked.

Despite these limitations, preference and non-preference data reveal the preschooler's emerging ability to evaluate the television she views

*Two periods yielded very small data bases (John: 1:0-1:11 and Kathy: 2:0-2:11) and percentages for these periods should be considered less precise.

in terms of individual preferences and dislikes. The general trend is from non-discriminate to more discriminate vieiwng. As her repertoire expands to include a greater range of programming the preschooler learns to make choices between the variety of fare offered by television.

Our data suggest certain common threads in the choices children make. These preference trends closely parallel the repertoire trends already reported. We have seen that repertoires begin with Children's Shows and Cartoons and then expand to include Situation Comedies and Action-Adventure fare. Relatedly, we will see that preferences begin by clustering around age-appropriate fare and blossom to include less age-appropriate and more narratively complex programming. Preferences for Situation Comedy/Variety fare appear prior to preferences for Action-Adventure fare.

In addition to indicating these developmental trends in preferences, these data, like the repertoire data, underscore the potent variable of parental company while viewing. We found several examples of a child reporting strong preferences for programming he normally dislikes if it is viewed in the company of a parent (see Table 2). Kathy, at age 2, expresses avid preference for much of the adult programming that she watches with her mother. Presumably this adult programming is appealing because Kathy and her mother watch it together. From a cognitive point of view, most of the content of this adult fare should be completely inaccessible to a 2 year old.

The following is a brief, year-by-year summary of the data together with a discussion of some non-preference trends. Particular attention is paid to individual differences in the children's data, present as early as 2:0 - 2:11, and to choice situation data that shed light on the

hierarchical ranking of preferences within the program categories delineated in Table 2. A general discussion of preference trends follows this data summary.

1. 2:0 - 2:11. As Table 2 indicates, the majority of Donny's preferences are for Children's Shows and Cartoons. This is true for John as well, though, like Kathy, Sesame Street proves to be particularly attractive to him. While Kathy is not exposed to much of the cartoon and children's programming preferred by Donny and John, she does exhibit a strong preference for commercials as well as for much of the daytime adult fare she views with her mother.

Data for all children at times reveal lapses in overall television viewing. Parents report that their children occasionally go through periods where they are generally uninterested in television. Sometimes a child will show indifference or express disdain for a type of programming she has previously adored. For example, at 2:11, during the summer months, John's mother reports that John abruptly stopped viewing Sesame Street, one of his favorite shows, in favor of playing outside. At 2:8, Donny suddenly disclaims his favorite cartoon--Mickey Mouse--and his mother reports he watches less television in general.

A 2 year old's temporary lack of interest in television is certainly not surprising when one considers the scores of other engaging activities available to the toddler. Furthermore, passing fancies and spontaneous negativism are common traits for all 2 year olds and arise in many situations besides that of television viewing.

In addition to documenting the general non-preference "phases" common to all children, our data include several examples of more sophisticated and salient non-preferences among 2 year olds. For example,

both Donny and Kathy select and discriminate between specific programs within their own favored categories. Donny, at 2:5, goes through a period of selecting and enjoying only one particular animated show from among all of the Saturday morning cartoons. Kathy, during this period, expressly chooses certain adult programs over game shows broadcast at the same time. Donny's mother notices that Donny requests and watches a special series with his parents only as long as the main character is a child.

The above are examples of children's earliest and most rudimentary attempts to discriminate among shows on the basis of preference. These discriminations do not appear to be random. They seem to reflect the toddler's first attempts to relate program content to herself and to evaluate that content on the basis of its cognitive accessibility.

Alwitt, Anderson, Lorch and Levin (in press) have suggested that even the child as young as 3 years uses formal features as cues which signal the likely comprehensibility of a show's content. For example, when Donny realizes that the main character of a program no longer <u>looks</u> like a child (and like himself) then he begins to suspect that the show will be about adult topics. These topics are typically incomprehensible to Donny and thus, cannot command his attention. The formal features of a game show (lights, music, revolving sets), no matter how attractive in and of themselves, cannot sustain Kathy's interest after she learns to associate such formal cues with incomprehensible adult quiz formats and money contests.

In addition to illustrating the contribution of assessed comprehensibility to children's early non-preferences, our data also underscore certain individual differences in children's preferences. Even as early as 2:0 - 2:11 there is evidence that children vary in the amount of stimulation

they can tolerate. For example, Donny's mother reports that he cannot endure the "loud, chaotic pace" of a popular variety show nor the often frenetic tempo of The Electric Company. Kathy, on the other hand, is particularly attracted to the noise and fast pace of Commercials. The Electric Company is one of John's "favorites." These individual differences evolve over time and continue to effect a child's discriminations among the variety of programming television offers.

In summary, then, a combination of factors accounts for the children's non-preferences at age 2. There is evidence from all three children that some adult fare is consistently unappealing (see Table 2). At any time in the young preschooler's life, other activities may be more attractive than television and non-preferences may reflect childish whims more than real disdain. Sometimes, however, it is apparent that 2 year olds base their dislike of particular fare on its perceived incomprehensibility. Finally, individual differences play a major role in determining one child's tolerance for certain types of programming and another's dislike for the same.

2. 3:0 - 3:11. As noted, all three children's viewing repertoires expand considerably between the ages of 3 and 4. An increase in the range of preferences and non-preferences for all three children coincides with this development. As Table 2 indicates, all children display strong preferences for Children's Shows. Cartoon preferences are dominant factors in the boys' viewing while Sesame Street is Kathy's strongest preference. (Predictably, Kathy's attention data from videotape sessions reveal high attention levels to Sesame Street bits.) Both boys display a new and avid attraction for the Situation Comedies recently added to their repertoires

and Kathy continues to be highly attracted to commercials.

The boys' non-preference percentages are highest for Children's Shows--a category for which they also display strong preference. Choice situation data highlight some of the finer discriminations the boys make when they are forced to decide between two programs: John consistently chooses the Three Stooges over Sesame Street and Situation Comedies over educational Children's Shows. Donny also chooses Situation Comedies over educational Children's Shows, and frequently chooses his / favorite Situation Comedy over highly attractive Cartoons.

Discriminations of the type described above indicate that children at this age are capable of making finer discriminations among programs that are all basically appealing. When a child chooses between the Three Stooges and Sesame Street, or between Sanford and Son and The Electric Company, she is presumably invoking a set of subtler criteria than when she chooses between Sesame Street and the News. It is difficult to know what criteria a child is using when she makes choices between favored shows. Perhaps non-educational Children's Shows win out over educational ones. Whatever the criterion, it is employed regularly at this age, suggesting that children develop an ability to make and act on certain emerging discriminations.

Kathy appears to make some preference discriminations among the Children's Shows and Commercials she watches. Her choice data for this period, however, were too minimal to provide examples of finer discriminations, of the sort reported for the boys.

In addition to dislike for some adult programming, all children display, by this age, a well-developed disdain for the News. Videotape attention data reveal all children's consistently low attention to news bits.

These non-preferences appear to reflect the salient unappealing nature of programming geared to adult audiences. Such programming typically employs highly predictable and unchanging visual formats, to convey verbal information and transactions that can have little meaning to a 3 year old. By this age, children are already sensitive to the visual cues that signal this incomprehensible and uninteresting programming (Alwitt, Anderson, Lorch, and Levin, in press).

There appear to be fewer of the transient non-preferences described at 2:0 - 2:11. Instead, non-preferences begin to cluster around the program categories that have formerly formed a consistent part of the children's repertoires: Sesame Street and Children's Shows for Kathy, Children's Shows and Cartoons for the boys. This clustering of non-preferences suggests that the children learn to make judgments about what shows they prefer more than others only after considerable experience watching these programs. For the boys, individual and salient preferences for certain children's programming develop only after experience watching a wide variety of children's fare. For Kathy, some Commercials become more attractive than others, but only after she has attended to the appealing format of so many. These discriminations, again, are more sophisticated than the children's blanket dislike for the News or Adult programs. Instead, children are making preference decisions based on programming that is familiar, recognized, and, at least to some degree, understood.

3. <u>4:0 - 4:11.</u> Of interest in Donny and John's data is the resurgence of attraction to Sesame Street during this period, the still common and strong preference for Cartoons, and a new and shared enjoyment of the Action-Adventure fare they have both recently begun to watch. It appears

that the renewed interest in Sesame Street for John and the new interest in Action-Adventure fare for both boys, have supplanted the preferred status of Situation-Comedies apparent in the boys' data for the previous period.

Significantly, Kathy's preference profile during 4:0 - 4:11 is very similar to the preference profile present for the boys at 3:0 - 3:11. Kathy's new and enthusiastic enjoyment of Situation-Comedy fare is striking. Sesame Street preference has declined somewhat, as has Kathy's earlier, stronger preference for Commercials. Cartoon preference appears to be steadily increasing, as Kathy begins to watch more and more of the Cartoon fare her peers have already enjoyed for two years. In line with these increases in the range of preferences, John and Kathy both exhibit high attention levels to a much greater variety of the bits presented experimentally on videotapes.

All children again express strong dislike for the News and for some Adult programming although, as has been mentioned, John exhibits a very favorable attitude towards both types of fare when they are viewed in the early evening with his father. All children predictably display low attention levels to news bits presented on videotape. Kathy's statement at 4:3 aptly sums up the general attitude of all children towards the News during this period: "I hate the news. It talks about everything I hate." As this statement indicates, children at this age are beginning to become more aware of what the News is about. Another paper from this study which examines preschoolers' classification of the television world (Jaglom, Fagre, and Wilder, 1980) has documented that children around age 4:5 begin to understand the purpose of the News and its relationship to the

real world. Nonetheless, the information that is presented on the News is still unappealing and irrelevant to the world of the typical 4 year old.

The greater variety of non-preferences for Donny and Kathy during this period reflects the children's developing ability to determine and maintain "favorites." Choice situation data offer some interesting examples of these discriminations. Kathy chooses Situation Comedies over Sesame Street (just as John did during the previous period). Donny consistently chooses his favorite Action-Adventure series over Sesame Street. The same choice is made by John who typically chooses his "favorite" Action-Adventure show over Sesame Street.

4. 5:0 - 5:11. Although the data for this year are incomplete and not represented in Table 2, based on several recent follow-up sessions, it is possible to make some general statements about the children's repertoire and preference profiles.

Both boys continue to watch a large amount of Cartoon and Action-Adventure fare while Children's Show viewing begins to drop off. Relatedly, Kathy's data suggest a great deal of Cartoon viewing.

Both Donny's and John's strongest preferences are for Cartoons and Action-Adventure fare. Donny's percentages to date are 44% and 16% respectively. John's are 42% and 25% respectively. Given the strong basis for these preferences at 4:0 - 4:11, it is likely that these data accurately predict preferences for this programming at 5:0 - 5:11.

Kathy's preference data are 80% for Cartoons and 20% for Sesame Street. Data are unavailable for other categories.

D. Summary and Discussion of Preference Data

Clear developmental trends in children's television preferences emerge from the individual profiles described above. At a general level we have seen how preschool children begin by viewing television with a non-discriminating eye. Children's viewing schedules at age 2 are, in a large part, determined by parents and their generally benign attitudes towards most children's fare on television. In addition, the young viewer's schedule is affected by individual parental habits and prohibitions. Adult programming often makes up a large part of preschoolers' early repertoires as children appear to enjoy their parents' company in front of the television regardless of what is being broadcast at the time.

Though preference patterns are far from well-established at the age of 2, children already begin to develop preference attitudes towards some programming at this age. Rudimentary viewing discriminations appear as children begin to associate the formal features of some adult programming with incomprehensible and thus, unappealing content. Individual differences in children's ability to tolerate certain types of television fare emerge at this age and contribute to one child's early preference for loud, frenetic programs, and another's dislike of the same. Children's developing discriminations also begin to reflect the degree of exposure that they have had to certain fare. Children who have watched Cartoons and/or Situation Comedies early on, make finer discriminations within these categories than do children who have not been exposed to this fare as often. It is interesting to speculate about how much different Kathy's viewing tastes might have been had her parents allowed her to sample a greater

variety of fare at age 2.

The early transient attractions to certain programs evidenced at age 2, begin to grow into salient preferences and non-preferences in the coming years. For example, by age 3, all children know that they hate the news and that such programming, along with other Adult fare which employs similar formats (talk shows, documentaries, some game shows) is to be ignored or avoided. (This basic trend is only altered when a child finds parental company appealing enough to counteract the show's inherent unattractiveness.)

Besides pointing up children's general tendency with age towards greater selectivity among programs, our data have suggested certain common threads in the children's preferences. At age 2, all children prefer age-appropriate fare. This testifies, in part, to the effectiveness of children's show production techniques which capture a young toddler's attention with a variety of sounds, sets, and fantastical characters. All kinds of attractive characters, including puppets, clowns, talking animals, etc. offer the child a window on worlds of stories and fantasies--those attractive offerings traditionally available in favorite picture books and/or on children's records. Children's television programming often provides the child a chance to participate in singing a song, or repeating letters, or moving to music. These stimulating and active experiences heighten the appeal of television for young children.

Beyond the overall appeal of Children's Shows at an early age, both repertoire and preference data underscore the early and enduring attraction of animation/cartoons. For one child, we have seen the intense attraction of ommercials and have postulated that this attraction is based

on the same factors which make cartoons attractive. These fares typically appeal to young viewers through use of a variety of flashy formal features; bright colors, loud sound, simple sets, quick repetitive actions, fast-paced editing and varied camera shots. Huston-Stein and Wright (1977) have postulated that ". . . young or inexperienced viewers may attend and respond primarily to formal, attention-getting features of television programs, like action, pace, and variability."

In addition to these formal features, children's animation presents narrative content that is extremely simple, redundant and humorous. Narrative information is usually displayed visually and dialogue is stylized and exaggerated. Simple plots and slapstick, physical humor are particularly appealing to the preschooler.

It is also apparent from our data that all children eventually experience a strong attraction for animation that presents superhero characters. Cartoons such as Spiderman, Plasticman, and Superman feature characters that, though stilted and two-dimensional to the adult, are readable and predictable to the child. It has been argued that superhero characters presented in any medium offer children an opportunity to play out aggressive impulses in a vicarious and non-threatening way (Bettelheim, 1976). Children often imitate the powers of their favorite superheroes and they identify with the characters' struggles to wield power over people.

No doubt, in the end, a Cartoon's appeal reflects a variety of factors; its highly attractive formal features, its simple and accessible narrative structure, and its display of superhuman characters that defy conventional authority in a way every child would like to be able to do at times.

By the age of 3, the preschooler's tastes have branched out considerably. Our data illustrates how strong the appeal of Situation Comedies becomes for children whose parents facilitate their exposure to this programming. These live-action shows are partly attractive because they exhibit the same production features as Cartoons. Typically, early evening Situation Comedy fare, like Cartoons, presents two-dimensional and predictable characters engaging in a series of fairly self-contained and slapstick episodes. These short, funny and highly visual segments can be enjoyed by preschoolers even if the overall plot or nuance of a Situation Comedy program escapes them (Anderson, Lorch, Field, and Sanders, in press; Collins, 1979; Huston-Stein, Wright, Rice, Potts, et al., n.d.).

In this connection, it is perhaps predictable that the Situation Comedies typically enjoyed by the children in our study were those that presented characters actively involved in some predicament rather than those that relied solely on dialogue or political satire to convey a plot. Such shows as Bewitched, Adams Family or Gilligan's Island were especially appealing. These programs normally employ loud and exaggerated character voices and sound effects that are echoed by a predictably-timed laugh track. Uproarious laugh tracks encourage the toddler's own laughing and enhance her delight in the show. Finally, preschoolers can, at least superficially, identify with the domestic settings of Situation Comedies as well as with the child and parent roles so often portrayed. For all of these reasons, then, it is understandable that preschoolers are so attracted to this fare.

At this point in our discussion, we can propose one possible explanation for the preference trends noted thus far. This explanation is based on the appeal of different kinds of characters.

We have seen that children begin by preferring age-appropriate fare that offers a variety of visually pleasing and legible characters to enjoy. Children are attracted to these fanciful puppets, clowns, and talking animals as well as to the children who so often take part in such children's shows as Sesame Street, Zoom, Romper Room, etc.

As preschoolers begin to develop appreciation for Cartoon viewing, they continue to enjoy animal and child characters (e.g., Mickey Mouse, Casper, Tom and Jerry) but they also begin to exhibit an attraction for adult figures (e.g., Superman, Batman, Plasticman). Like the characters in Children's Shows, these larger-than-life, superhuman adult figures are two-dimensional and legible. Children can predict how they will behave and clearly enjoy the chance to participate vicariously in the characters' fanciful, animated adventures.

Finally, we have noted that between their third and fourth years, children begin to prefer Situation Comedies and that these preferences, in some cases, begin to supplant the preferred status of many Chidlren's Shows. A child's appreciation of Situation Comedy characters would seem yet another step away from the preference for animal/puppet/child characters and superhero adult characters. After experience watching these juvenile and superhuman figures, the child becomes capable of appreciating the more normally proportioned adult and teen characters of many Situation Comedies (e.g., Gilligan, The Fonz, Lucy, etc.). Of course, such characters still must appear in the two-dimensional and

exaggerated contexts of Situation Comedies in order to be appealing and it is only the much older child who can begin to appreciate realistic drama.

We have seen how Kathy's strong Situation Comedy preferences only emerge at 4:0 - 4:11, after her parents allow her to watch this fare. This is the time that we observe Action-Adventure preferences replacing Situation Comedy appeal for the boys. To a certain extent, the child who is exposed to both Action-Adventure fare and to Situation Comedy fare is forced to make a decision between them since both types of fare are often aired at the same time in the evening. Perhaps it is the novelty of Action-Adventure fare that is so attractive to the boys at 4:0 - 4:11. However, data about children's preferences for superhero animation would suggest that the superhero live-action characters involved in Action-Adventure series are attractive for other, more complex reasons as well. Just as children love cartoon characters that fight off simplistic evil forces with extraordinary and often magical powers, so they adore live-action characters who do the same. Action-Adventure superheroes look "real," as opposed to animated. This contributes to their credibility, making them even easier to identify with, and thus more appealing.

In addition, Action-Adventure figures, who are created for live-action series, quite often represent more complete personalities than their cartoon counterparts and they are enclosed in more visually realistic contexts. For example, John's favorite--The Incredible Hulk--is a character whose human vulnerability is captured in an alter-ego--David Banner. The settings of a live action show such as Star Trek make

the intercelestial battles and super adventures of its characters that much more plausible and meaningful to Donny. In some ways, then, the preschooler's appreciation of live-action Action-Adventure fare represents yet another step in the level of criteria a child uses in evaluating a character's appeal.

Complementing the observed developmental trend in children's ability to appreciate more sophisticated character portrayals, our data suggest that preschoolers become more competent in their appreciation of narrative content. We can interpret the children's progress from appreciation of Children's Shows to Cartoons to Situation Comedies and to Action-Adventure fare as reflecting their growing ability to grasp narrative. Children start by appreciating bits which are "visually complete" and which require almost no sensitivity to narrative at all. For example, the short disconnected "scenes" on Sesame Street, where a funny animated letter or form traverses the screen to percussion or nonsense sounds are appreciated by the very young preschooler. Children's shows such as Sesame Street or Mister Rogers offer the slightly older child the opportunity to enjoy the brief one-minute bits that present a short story through the use of puppets and "make-believe" sets. Cartoons then offer children even more sustained narratives in short 3-10 minute episodes. Finally, the more complex narrative of a late favored Situation Comedy or Action-Adventure show may run up to 30 minutes. As others have also shown (Collins, 1979; Leifer, Collins, Gross, et al., 1971), young children do not grasp a great deal of the implicit content of these longer narrative programs. Nonetheless, children's documented preferences for this fare at this early age suggest that they at least enjoy the challenge

renewed vigor because of its uniquely educational appeal. Children, by this age, can follow all the narratives and understand the jokes and letter games presented in the context of the show's appealing format.

Our study has raised some provocative questions about preschoolers' television repertoires and their viewing preferences: How much can parents really alter the sequence of television preferences that a young child acquires through temporarily censoring a child's exposure to certain fare? How significant is the role of parental viewing habits (that influence toddlers) in the development of the later tastes and inclinations of adolescent viewers? Why do children prefer the fare that they do and how do individual personalities and cognitive styles interact with these preferences?

While these and other queries await further and more extensive investigation, the findings of our exploratory research suggest a great deal of regularity in the evolving repertoires of preschool viewers despite individual parental rules and routines. Further, from very early on, children gain some control over their viewing experiences through the expression of preferences and dislikes for certain fare. These preferences appear to have a great deal of regularity across children and appear to be under the influence of some powerful cognitive-maturational factors. It is evident that television producers have a very good sense of what these factors are, given the current appeal of such a wide variety of programming to preschoolers.

of attending to sustained narratives.

One last remark on Action-Adventure preferences. Our data are suggestive of a sex difference in the appeal of Action-Adventure fare at the age of 4:0 - 4:11. However, since Kathy was not exposed to this fare at the same time as the boys were, and since she appears to be observing the trend from Children's Shows to Situation Comedies at a slower pace than the boys, it is not clear whether she will display the same preference for Action-Adventure fare during her sixth year that the boys exhibit during their fifth. It is likely that boys are attracted to same sex superheroes. Currently, however, television producers are making some attempt to create series around female superheroes and it is at least plausible that Kathy would be attracted to them in the same way. Clearly it is premature to speculate about predictions that await far more extensive investigation.

Also meriting further comment is one of our observed preference trends. While we have noted the drop-off in preferences for Children's Shows, as Situation Comedies and Action-Adventure fare becomes more popular, we have seen that, for the boys, Sesame Street is more frequently viewed and preferred than it was during previous periods. It is striking that children should find this educational fare so attractive during the year when the entertainment appeal of other programming is so potent. It is quite possible that this later appeal of Sesame Street reflects a U-shaped phenomenon. At age 2, children are watching this show because of its highly appealing formal features and whimsical characters. At ages 3 to 4, Sesame Street watching declines somewhat as the appeal of other programming (non-educational Children's Shows and Situation Comedies) becomes prominent. Then, at ages 4 to 5, children watch Sesame Street with

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Table 1. Viewing Repertoires

	Donny	John	Kathy
2:0-2:11	Sesame Street	Sesame Street	Sesame Street (more)
	Children's Shows	Children's Shows	Children's Shows
	Cartoons	Cartoons	(Cartoons--not allowed)
	Situation-Comedy (with parents)	(Adult)	Adult (day with mother)
			Commercials
3:0-3:11	Sesame Street	Sesame Street	Sesame Street
	Children's Shows (educational and non-educational)	Children's Shows (educational and non-educational)	Children's Shows (mostly educational)
	Cartoons	Situation-Comedy	(Cartoons-3:10)
	Situation-Comedy		(Situation-Comedy-not allowed)
			Adult (with parent)
			Commercials
4:0-4:11	Sesame Street	Sesame Street	Sesame Street
	Children's Shows	Children's Shows	Children's Shows
	Cartoons	Cartoons	Cartoons
	Action-Adventure	Action-Adventure	Situation-Comedy
	Adult (with parent)	Adult (with parents)	(Action-Adventure-not allowed)
			Adult (with parent)

Table 2

Percentages of Total Yearly Preference and Non-Preference Data for Three Children

	Donny		John		Kathy	
Categories	Pref.	Non-Pref.	Pref.	Non-Pref.	Pref.	Non-Pref.
2:0-2:11						
Sesame Street	3	4	33		47	
Children's Shows	29	14	17			3
Cartoons	22	11	33			
Situation-Comedy	3					
Action-Adventure	3					
Adult	3	8		17	13	8
News						3
Commercials					26	
3:0-3:11						
Sesame Street	7		4		31	4
Children's Shows	18	12	21	12	20	4
Cartoons	21	3	16	4	4	
Situation-Comedy	18	5	14			
Action-Adventure	2					
Adult		3	4	9		2
News		11		8		12
Commercials					21	2
4:0-4:11						
Sesame Street	16	4	21		14	2
Children's Shows	11	2	7	4	14	
Cartoons	25	2	11		9	2
Situation-Comedy	4	2	3		22	1
Action-Adventure	10	1	24			
Adult		6	14*	5	1	4
News		13	4*	7		17
Commercials		4			8	2

*with father

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Harvard Project Zero is a basic research program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Its original charge was to study creation and comprehension in the arts and means toward better art education. A prime objective throughout the Project's history has been to provide a sound theoretical and experimental base for effective education of artists and audiences. The Project began in the fall of 1967 in response to the frank admission that, however much is known about how to educate in science and how to evaluate scientific work, practically nothing is known about the underlying principles of how to teach and evaluate in art. From that challenging "zero" the Project took its name and tasks. Our research methods include rigorous conceptual analysis, investigation of relevant literature, design and execution of key experiments in psychology and other fields, visits to arts education institutions, and application of results to proposing and assessing programs in art education.

Project founder and former director Nelson Goodman's book Languages of Art (Bobbs-Merrill, 1968) has provided important direction in our effort to isolate and investigate basic skills. This work sets forth a "theory of symbols," a broad treatment of elements of communication, embracing words, gestures, diagrams, paintings, poems, musical scores, and so on. Almost all the psychological processes under consideration in our studies of the arts involve extensive operation with and upon symbols of various kinds. These symbols are not merely instruments of communication, but also instruments of cognition, tools in terms of which the mind deals with the perceptual world.

Some of our research has examined the psychological implications of the theoretical models of symbol systems introduced in Languages of Art. For instance, one question is whether different information processing skills are necessary to produce effective art within linguistic, versus nonlinguistic, symbol systems. Another, complementary approach emphasizes problem solving and search strategies in the moment-to-moment perception and production of a work of art. How do subjects search for rhyme words in poetry or explore alternative placements of pieces in collage? A favorite means of developing and testing new models is through the study of errors. By using impoverished or ambiguous stimuli, assigning tasks somewhat too difficult for a subject, or working with brain-damaged subjects, one can elicit patterns of error-making which suggest hypotheses and select between alternative models of a process. These approaches characterize many of the Project's investigations mentioned below in a list of Project members and their particular interests.

Though the development of actual curricula in arts education is not a primary concern, the Project does contribute to the field of practical education. Project members have responded to inquiries and requests to comment on curricula from teachers in the field. Establishment of Harvard Summer School's Institute in Arts Administration resulted from the Project's reply to an inquiry from the director of the Harvard Summer School, and members of the Project staff cooperated in planning the Institute, in preparing material, and in the actual teaching. Consideration consultation has been provided to schools, museums, television, and a variety of arts institutions by members of the Project.

The Project has also sponsored a series of lecture-performances in various media, designed to give the general public and prospective public school teachers and administrators better insight into and attitudes towards artists and the arts. As the series title "Art in the Making" suggests, the purpose of the lecture-demonstrations was to reveal something of the artist's way of working, rather than to display his products. In the presence of an audience free to ask questions, each artist explored alternatives, exposed some constraints of his medium, compared his various efforts, and searched for the right effect, choice by choice.

While maintaining a major concern with the arts and art education, the Project, under its current co-directors, has considerably broadened its field of inquiry and now investigates a whole range of topics in the area of cognitive psychology. One part of the Project has focussed particularly on developmental studies. Among the topics currently being investigated are the emergence of symbolic capacities during the first years of life; the development of literary abilities, specifically the capacity to produce and appreciate metaphors and stories; children's understandings of the various worlds presented on television; the emergence of drawing skills; and the breakdown of various symbol using capacities under various forms of brain damage. The other part of the Project has concentrated on studies in the areas of cognitive and perceptual psychology, ones which utilize both normal adult subjects and gifted artists. Among the topics investigated recently have been critical judgment and the sources of critical disagreement in adults; the thought processes of professional and amateur poets and painters in developing works; the role of geometric principles in visual perception and picture perception particularly; reasoning about everyday matters and the logical difficulties people encounter.

A list of recent papers which can be purchased from the Project is available upon request.